

Secretary of State's Video Message for

International Women's Day

Remarks as Delivered, 2/23/10

March 8th is International Women's Day—a day to reflect on the progress the world has made in advancing women's rights, and to recognize what work remains to be done.

This year marks an anniversary very close to my heart. Fifteen years ago, along with women and men from around the world I attended the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. The message from that conference rang loudly and clearly, and still echoes across cultures and continents: Human rights are women's rights, and women's rights are human rights.

One hundred and eighty-nine countries represented at Beijing adopted a Platform for Action that pledged to increase women's access to education, healthcare, jobs, and credit, and to protect their right to live free from violence.

We have made great progress, but there is a long way to go. Women are still the majority of the world's poor, unhealthy, underfed, and uneducated. They rarely cause violent conflicts but too often bear their consequences. Women are absent from negotiations about peace and security to end those conflicts. Their voices simply are not being heard.

Today, the United States is making women a cornerstone of foreign policy because we think it's the right thing to do, but we also believe it's the smart thing to do as well.

Investing in the potential of the world's women and girls is one of the surest ways to achieve global economic progress, political stability, and greater prosperity for women — and men — the world over.

So on this International Women's Day, let us rededicate ourselves to advancing and protecting the rights of women and girls, and to join together to ensure that no one is left behind in the 21st century.